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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2016

NEWS State Finds Alarming High Arsenic, Cadmium Levels Near Two SE Portland Schools

POSTED BY DANIEL FORBES ON WED, FEB 3, 2016 AT 2:06 PM



GOOGLE

A portion of the Bullseye Glass facility in SE Portland

Within days, state officials are slated to release the alarming results of a monitoring program of airborne heavy metals, including arsenic, conducted this past October in inner Southeast Portland, the *Mercury* has learned.

The state Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Health Authority plan to announce that DEQ data indicate a monthly average of 49 times the state air-safety benchmark level for the neurotoxin and carcinogen cadmium, and 159 times DEQ's air-safety goal for the carcinogen arsenic.

Though DEQ is still determining roughly how far these hazardous air pollutants (as they're officially known) have spread, most immediately at risk are two Portland schools—Cleveland High School and Winterhaven K-8— and a 100-child, private day care facility on the nearby Fred Meyer corporate campus that serves children as young as six weeks old.

The likely culprit for all this, say state officials: **Bullseye Glass**, which has its main factory at 3722 SE 21st. Founded in 1974, Bullseye is a sizable art and architectural glass

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manufacturer that boasts 140 employees at its Portland headquarters and operates satellite facilities north of Oakland, in Sante Fe, and in a suburb north of New York.

"I can say, yes, we're confident it's Bullseye," said Sarah Armitage, a DEQ air toxics specialist and the agency's point person on its investigation.

David Monro, DEQ's air quality manager for the Northwest Region said: "Bullseye?—yes, I think it's the source of the cadmium and arsenic we found. It passes the straight-faced test."

Oddly enough, the way Oregon's environmental regulations are structured, there's not a thing DEQ can do to force Bullseye to alter its manufacturing processes and limit its toxic emissions. That's because the regulations are geared to much larger facilities—think companies that mass produce beer bottles—rather than high-end art glass manufacturers.

Under its state permit, the company is legally allowed to emit 10 tons of any given air pollutant a year, or 25 tons for any combination of two or more toxics spewing from their stacks. Those weights, expressed in tons, apply not to the physical raw material involved, but to the amount of aerosol emissions—the weight of the smoke, or smog, or plume.

According to an April 2011 DEQ "Discharge Permit Review Report," Bullseye used 6,000 pounds of hazardous raw materials in 2009, which would have made it impossible for its emissions to even approach 10 tons. The company's total in the clear as far government limiting its activities—children across the road notwithstanding.

"They're in compliance with their permit," said Monro. "DEQ can't stop them."

Armitage put it this way: "We're finding out the regs don't control the risk from glass."

Keith Dubanevich, an environmental attorney with Portland law firm Stoll Berne, offered this perspective: "Environmental regulations take place in one-size-fits all fashion." So small firms like Bullseye slip through the cracks. Ultimately this means, he added, "We as a society are willing to tolerate pollution."

Be that as it may, Stuart Batterman, a professor of both environmental health and environmental engineering at the University of Michigan, said, "That site needs to be brought under control."

According to that 2011 DEQ Bullseye permit review, "materials used at the facility may include arsenic trioxide, cadmium, selenium, chromium, and lead as coloring agents or to produce trade-mark characteristics in the glass." DEQ notes that Bullseye used 825 pounds of arsenic in 2009, much of it shoveled into a furnace to be melted along with all the other raw material to give some very nice glass its pretty color. The company website notes that it makes 27 different glass products that contain "more than 0.5% cadmium."

Bullseye founder and co-owner Daniel Schwoerer was reached by phone Monday afternoon, a short time after Monro left his building.

Shaken by just then learning DEQ's findings, Schwoerer said, "We were not aware of potential emissions. All I can say is we're a good citizen. We're concerned." He added, "I know we're in compliance with DEQ and other agencies.... We've done everything within the law to work with these materials."

Schwoerer referred the *Mercury* to a staffer he said had more technical expertise: Eric Durrin, who minds the company's finances. Durrin offered little beyond four or five robotic repetitions that "We operate our factory in full compliance with our discharge permit." Asked what equipment Bullseye had in place to limit fugitive emissions, he stated at least twice, "We handle our raw materials in a safe and professional manner." But Durrin was unfamiliar with the "baghouse" air pollution control device that DEQ requires his company deploy. (Monro inspected it on Monday and said it was in good shape.)

Durrin pointed to another Bullseye employee, Sam Andreaskos, who he said was more involved in production, and would know better. Asked his awareness of cadmium as a neurotoxin that recent research indicates may be thought of as somewhat analogous to lead, Durrin said, "My training is in accounting."

Andreaskos, a "glass chemist" with Bullseye, declined to speak with the *Mercury*, saying "I don't feel compelled to talk you." Neither Bullseye co-owner Schwoerer nor Durrin replied to questions about whether the company would commit to suspending its use of arsenic and cadmium.

Ultimately of course, any decision rests with the private company's co-owners Schwoerer and business and life partner Lani McGregor, who sits on the Portland Art Museum's board of trustees.



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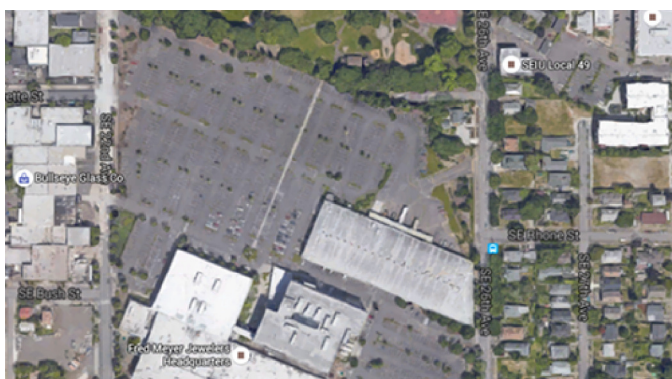
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GOOGLE

An aerial view showing Bullseye Glass's proximity to Fred Meyer corporate headquarters, a city park, and Cleveland High School

DEQ establishes safe air goals known as Ambient Benchmark Concentrations (ABCs); for cadmium the figure is 0.6 nanograms per cubic meter (ng/m³) of air; for arsenic, it's 0.2 ng/m³. The monthly average DEQ obtained in 18 samples it collected with the current gold-standard monitor from October 6 to November 2 was 29.4 ng/m³ for cadmium and 31.7 ng/m³ for arsenic according to Armitage.

On some days, depending, apparently, on Bullseye's production schedule, the amount of fugitive cadmium released just minimally exceeded Oregon's ABC safe-air goal of 0.6 ng/m³, Armitage said. But on any given day, the amount of cadmium impacting homes and schools and businesses might have far exceeded the already dire monthly averages mentioned above.

For instance, according to Armitage, the DEQ air monitor that spent the month in a Fred Meyer parking lot cheek-by-jowl with Bullseye obtained a daily cadmium level of 195 ng/m³; another day, the figure was 133 ng/m³. Those levels are 325 and 222-times DEQ's safe-air goal.

The three highest daily readings for arsenic were 101 ng/m³; 97 ng/m³; 93 ng/m³, according to another scientist involved in the monitoring. That's hundreds of times DEQ's safe-air goal for arsenic, based on its potential as a carcinogen, of 0.2 ng/m³. It's unknown how constant October's dangerous levels have been over Bullseye's 42 years in business.

Aware of DEQ's findings, the *Mercury* reached out on Tuesday to the management of the day care facility at Fred Meyer's headquarters, KinderCare Education LLC, and alerted them to the toxic plume that washed regularly over the building—at least this past October.

KinderCare Health and Safety Director Stephanie Kuntz replied by email.

"We were caught entirely unaware that any testing had even occurred, and are horrified to hear that the testing apparently indicated that potentially harmful chemicals were present in the air at the time..." Kuntz wrote. "Until we know more about the state of the air and soil quality at the center and can assess the risks of exposure present, if any, we will keep children indoors."

Kuntz says her day care has reached out to the Multnomah County Health Department about the issue and has been told that new filters on its ventilation system will help.

"We are informed by them that proper filtration on an HVAC system should materially protect the air quality in our center," she wrote. "They did not recommend any additional actions in response to the issue at this time..."

Batterman, the University of Michigan professor, said new-generation HVAC filters "can reduce indoor concentrations of the toxic by two times or three times the levels of the outside, ambient air." Asked whether that should provide much reassurance to parents of kids exposed to cadmium levels 49 times the state benchmark and arsenic 159 times that level, he said no.

Batterman added that keeping children inside lowers exposure, but does not eliminate it. Asked about DEQ's findings in general, he termed cadmium and arsenic known carcinogens and said, "I'd be very concerned.... There are lots of potential effects."

Oddly enough, DEQ actually alerted Bullseye this past September that it was about to set up an air monitor close by. The agency informed Bullseye's Durrin.

To their credit, both the DEQ and the OHA have been working at a feverish pace since receiving October's data on January 20th. Once the *Mercury* independently learned of the unfolding disaster, both Armitage and Oregon Health Authority toxicologist David Farrer granted frank interviews.



In conjunction with the Multnomah County Health Department, both agencies will be informing the public of their findings. The delay is due to the formulation of "risk maps," which will indicate, to some degree, how far the cadmium and arsenic spread from its source.

That involves crunching the data from the Fred Meyer parking lot along with DEQ's air monitors located in St. Johns, at North Roselawn, and a third location. The maps should be completed this week, and then the public announcement will be made, perhaps Wednesday.

In fact, the agencies have taken tentative steps toward alerting the public. On Tuesday evening, after being questioned by the *Mercury*, the DEQ briefly posted a press release on its findings, which announced: "Preliminary data showing the existence of high levels of cadmium and arsenic in the air near S.E. 22nd Ave. and Powell Boulevard in Portland are prompting state agencies to investigate potential health risks from exposure to these metals."

The agency subsequently took the release down, and has since posted a **shorter version**.

Portlanders can take some small comfort from the fact that there's no Flint-Michigan-drinking-water style cover-up here.

Armitage and her DEQ colleagues have been trying to determine the source of the elevated cadmium that has fouled Portland's air since at least 2004. She said, "We've been hunting for it for three years, and it looks like we found it."

DEQ was alerted to the likely source by a U.S. Forest Service study of air toxics that show up in moss. Once the initial data hit Armitage's desk two weeks ago, it's been all hands-on-deck, she says, to generate those risk maps that OHA wants so as not to unduly alarm all of Portland.

Still, any backyard gardeners growing leafy vegetables such as kale, which particularly leach up cadmium from the soil, well might consider eating no more till they get their soil tested.

Stoll Berne's attorney, Keith Dubanevich, said "If you're a homeowner living in the area, the argument can be made that your property value has decreased."

*Daniel Forbes is the author of **Derail this Train Wreck**. He lives in Portland, and can be reached at ddanforbes@aol.com.*

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report

7 likes, 4 dislikes like dislike

Posted by **Bill Reltub** on 02/03/2016 at 2:30 PM



I love one block away. I have a ten month old. I am now fairly terrified.

report

7 likes, 5 dislikes like dislike

Posted by **Kerry Ryan** on 02/03/2016 at 3:06 PM



This is terrifying. I have a ten month old and live one block north of Bullseye. Do I... need to go stay at a hotel? I have no idea how alarmed I should be.

report

6 likes, 5 dislikes like dislike

Posted by **Kerry Ryan** on 02/03/2016 at 3:08 PM



Three years? They were searching for three years? Within minutes after receiving the notice from our daycare last night I was able to search the internet and discern that the metals being discussed are used in glass manufacturing. I am extremely distressed that my child can't play outside at school now, that she has been playing outside with these known pollutants for years, that my vegetable garden is likely toxic. I need more info. I need it quickly. I do not want to hear that DEQ can do nothing. That is not acceptable to my family and the other people here in our neighborhood.

report

14 likes, 4 dislikes like dislike

Posted by **Erin Elledge Meeker** on 02/03/2016 at 3:08 PM



I just called Bullseye Glass and left a message with Eric Durrin. I urge you to do the same. (503) 232-8887

report

8 likes, 12 dislikes like dislike

Posted by **Kerry Ryan** on 02/03/2016 at 3:16 PM



Curious if there is information about this from Bullseye's satellite facilities in other states. That could be an interesting line of inquiry, as far as figuring out how much is actually known about the pollutants.

report

5 likes, 3 dislikes like dislike

Posted by **pork chop** on 02/03/2016 at 4:14 PM



Hmmm, makes me wonder about another art glass factory, Uroboros, located in the Albina industrial district at 2139 N. Kerby.

report

13 likes, 2 dislikes like dislike

Posted by **randyzpdx** on 02/03/2016 at 4:50 PM



Good for the Merc for breaking this news!

Commissioner Fish (Bureau of Environmental Services), Mayor Hales, the Multnomah County Health Department, Governor Brown and the EPA need to manage this. They need to immediately and clearly get out information on the risks to neighbors, then follow up with clear and continuous communication.

Calling the business may relieve some anger, but calling all of the above officials might be more effective. The business is not knowledgeable about the science.

From the above report, the Oregon DEQ and OHA are exceeding expectations, which is what we expect in this situation.

report

10 likes, 3 dislikes like dislike

Posted by **B** on 02/03/2016 at 5:02 PM



Yes, though the business may be able to suspend operations, given the circumstances. But agree, those other calls are also very important.

report

3 likes, 1 dislike like dislike

Posted by **Kerry Ryan** on 02/03/2016 at 5:25 PM



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Why weren't the Forest Service folks who are cited as originally finding the findings not interviewed here?

report

2 likes, 0 dislikes



Posted by **pork chop** on 02/03/2016 at 6:03 PM



<http://www.portlandcleanair.org/scans/26-3...> This page of their (now expired) permit shows the conditions of their permit. If neighbors could please read the permit and file formal complaints when they observe items such as smells or smoke plumes, please, it will help create some accountability. Their new permit may require they solve concerns people are having if they are violations of their prior permit. Public participation is critical for getting better terms (for the public) in their permits.

For anybody with in Multnomah and Washington Counties, you can read the permits and reviews for every permitted entity monitored by DEQ by clicking on individual point source emitters on the map on the front page of this site: <http://portlandcleanair.org/>

report

7 likes, 1 dislike



Posted by **sethwoolley** on 02/03/2016 at 6:06 PM



A glass factory cannot suspend operations. The glass would cool in the furnaces to a large brick and the entire furnace would have to be taken apart by hammers and scrapped.

The state report in a few days needs to include health risk advice. Presumably this all would have come out together in that report, but the Merc got the scoop.

<http://www.oregon.gov/newsroom/Pages/NewsD...>

report

2 likes, 1 dislike



Posted by **B** on 02/03/2016 at 6:32 PM



A glass factory cannot suspend operations. If it did, the glass in the kilns would cool into a solid brick and the entire kiln would have to be taken apart with hammers and scrapped.

Likely the Oregon DEQ report in a few days should include health advice. The Merc got a scoop so we are in this situation.

I think the state is very serious about this:

<http://www.oregon.gov/newsroom/Pages/NewsD...>

report

2 likes, 1 dislike



Posted by **B** on 02/03/2016 at 6:49 PM



I don't think anyone should call the business as a way of 'relieving their anger' I think people should politely call and very nicely say they are concerned and ask if the business will work with DEQ & the community to help resolve the problem(s). They may not but if they conscientious they will.

report

5 likes, 2 dislikes



Posted by **zipakit** on 02/03/2016 at 6:59 PM



Yes, of course, it wouldn't have made sense to unload my anger on them. I did, however, let them know about my concerns. Eric was very pleasant on the phone. All of this was news to him too, and so he shares the same concerns. I later sent a message on Facebook and received the following reply:

"We share your concern.

"We just learned of a recent report from DEQ. In 2015, the DEQ performed air monitoring tests in a parking lot near Bullseye Glass. On February 1, 2016, staff from the DEQ shared some test results with Bullseye. It was newly discovered that there were higher levels of Arsenic and Cadmium in Bullseye's neighborhood than in some other areas of the city. Additional samples were taken from different sites, but all the analysis for these other locations is not complete yet.

"We have engaged an environmental consulting firm to help us evaluate the data and conduct further testing and monitoring. Based on what we learn, although we are in full compliance with our air permit, Bullseye will take additional action based on any new findings that show corrective action is warranted.

"The owners and employees of Bullseye Glass care about the environment and our neighborhood and take this matter seriously."

I do think it is integral to keep them as a part of the conversation.

report

5 likes, 0 dislikes



Posted by **Kerry Ryan** on 02/03/2016 at 7:33 PM



Eric also gave me the name and number of the person at OHA who is the point-person for communication.

Jonathan Modie
971.673.1102

report

2 likes, 0 dislikes



like



dislike

Posted by **Kerry Ryan** on 02/03/2016 at 7:35 PM



This is insanely disturbing, especially after living in this neighborhood for 8+ years & having an array of health issues. I will join any efforts to shut this shit down.


report



like



dislike

Posted by **Bunna** on 02/03/2016 at 8:36 PM 

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